Targeting better health outcomes
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New Zealand's health system is in crisis – waitlists and emergency department wait times have soared, childhood immunisation rates have plunged, and Kiwis are facing longer delays to access urgent cancer treatment or surgery.

To deliver better health care for New Zealanders, National will:

1. Use targets to focus the health system on improving outcomes across five priority health areas.
2. Reverse the decline in immunisation rates through a short-term Immunisation Incentive Payment plan to encourage GP clinics to boost immunisation rates.

When Labour came to office, they abandoned the focus on health targets which were making a difference to the lives of New Zealanders and chose instead to pursue a hugely disruptive bureaucratic restructure of the health system. National knows you deliver better health outcomes by focusing on frontline services like surgeries, immunisation and emergency care. Unsurprisingly, since Labour abandoned health targets, every measure of health outcomes that had been steadily improving under National has gone backwards.

Proportion of emergency department patients seen within six hours

Restoring health targets and boosting immunisation rates are part of National’s plan to focus relentlessly on results and outcomes.

We will increase health funding every year, and shift resources from back-office bureaucrats to the frontline. We will increase funding for cancer medicines to provide access to 13 cancer treatments that are funded in Australia but not here. And we will address the health workforce crisis by training 220 more doctors a year and repaying up to $22,500 off nurses’ and midwives’ student loans in exchange for working in New Zealand for at least five years.

Our health system is struggling and health outcomes for New Zealanders are going backwards. National will reintroduce health targets to drive improvement in five priority health areas to focus the health system on delivering better outcomes. We will also deliver a shot in the arm for our declining immunisation rates, with a short-term, one-off Immunisation Incentive Payment plan for GPs.

[Graph showing Proportion of emergency department patients seen within six hours]

1Health New Zealand, Te Whatu Ora
1. Health Targets

The last National Government delivered improved health outcomes across a range of priority areas by establishing clear targets for the sector and regularly reporting performance against them for each region of the country.

Targets with regular, robust reporting help identify where the system is falling short, focus energy and effort on driving improvement, and ensure the health sector as a whole is working towards better health outcomes. Simply put, health targets save lives. Research into the previous National Government’s target for faster treatment in hospital emergency departments found a significant decrease in mortality rates among those admitted to emergency departments, with around 700 fewer deaths in one year than predicted if pre-target trends had continued.

That’s why it’s no surprise that when Labour abandoned the focus on health targets and embarked on a hugely disruptive back-office restructure, actual health outcomes for New Zealanders suffered, with wait times blowing out, access to cancer treatment reducing, and childhood immunisation rates plummeting.

National will restore health targets and publish progress against them by region each quarter so New Zealanders can see how well the health system is serving their community.

This will drive improvement in outcomes and have a significant impact on ensuring better, faster and more convenient healthcare for New Zealanders.

National’s Health Targets

1. **Shorter stays in emergency department** – 95% of patients to be admitted, discharged or transferred from an emergency department within six hours.
2. **Faster cancer treatment** – 85% of patients to receive cancer management within 31 days of the decision to treat.
3. **Improved immunisation** – 95% of two-year-olds receiving their full age-appropriate immunisations.
4. **Shorter wait times for first specialist assessment** – a meaningful reduction in the number of people waiting more than four months to see a specialist (target to be set in government).
5. **Shorter wait times for surgery** – a meaningful reduction in the number of people waiting more than four months for surgery (target to be set in government).

Targets 1-3 are explicit as these are the same or similar to those National previously set in government. The targets for shorter wait times for first specialist appointment and shorter wait times for surgery are new, reflecting areas where outcomes have deteriorated over the last six years. For these targets, National will work with the health sector to improve the quality of existing data, establish baseline measures, and determine ambitious and achievable targets for improvement once in government.
2. Immunisation Incentive Payments

To support National’s childhood immunisation goal while lifting immunisation rates for two other at-risk age groups – under 18s and seniors – National will establish a one-off Immunisation Incentive Payments programme for GP clinics that are able to lift immunisation rates for their eligible enrolled patients.

Under the Immunisation Incentive Payments plan, GP clinics will be eligible for a one-off payment of $10 for every enrolled patient on their books provided they achieve each of the following three improvement measures by 30 June 2024:

- Childhood immunisation (24 months) – improve immunisation rate by five percentage points or achieve a 95% immunisation rate among eligible patients.
- MMR immunisation (1-17 years) – improve immunisation rate by five percentage points or achieve a 95% immunisation rate among eligible patients.
- Influenza vaccination (65 years and over) – improve immunisation rate by five percentage points or achieve a 75% immunisation rate among eligible patients.

The baseline for each GP clinic will be the immunisation rate for their enrolled patients in each of these target groups as of 31 October 2023.

For example, under National’s Immunisation Incentive Payments plan, a GP clinic with 4,500 total enrolled patients on its books that achieves all three of these improvements would receive a total payment of $45,000.

National will allocate $52 million for the Immunisation Incentive Payment plan, which is the maximum cost if every GP clinic in the country achieves all three targets.

The Immunisation Incentive Payment plan will be funded from National’s commitment to increase funding for health every year we are in office.

Proportion of 24-month-olds fully immunised

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GET OUR COUNTRY BACK ON TRACK

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